

Message Text

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PAGE 01 REYKJA 01457 242128Z

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 SAJ-01 SAM-01 ACDA-10 /080 W

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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4935

INFO CINCLANT

COMICEDEFOR

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 1457

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR MARR NATO US IC

SUBJECT: FURTHER COMMENT ON SIGNING OF DEFENSE AGREEMENT

REF: REYKJAVIK 1454

1. PRIME MINISTER GEIR HALLGRIMSSON IN INTERVIEW IN TODAY'S MORGUNBLADID, DEFENDED HIS GOVERNMENT'S DECISION NOT TO SEEK ALTHING APPROVAL PRIOR TO SIGNING OF DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH US BUT SAID THAT THERE WOULD BE PARLIAMENTARY DISCUSSION OF DEFENSE ISSUE. HALLGRIMSSON SAID, IN FULL: "I HAVE ALWAYS ASSUMED THAT THERE WOULD BE DISCUSSIONS ON THE DEFENSE ISSUE IN THE ALTHING AND I WILL ENLARGE UPON THIS IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S POLICY ADDRESS THAT WILL BE DELIVERED ABOUT A WEEK AFTER PARLIAMENT CONVENES (OCTOBER 29). I ALSO EXPECT THAT THIS QUESTION WILL BE DEALT WITH IN THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S REPORT WHEN IT IS PRESENTED. HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE STRESSED THAT THE DISCONTINUATION OF THE REVIEW OF THE DEFENSE TREATY AND THE CHANGES IN THE DEFENSE ARRANGEMENT THAT THE (NEW) AGREEMENT ENTAILS ARE ENCOMPASSED WITHIN THE DEFENSE TREATY ITSELF AND THEREFORE DO NOT REQUIRE A UNCLASSIFIED UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 REYKJA 01457 242128Z

SPECIAL PARLIAMENTARY DECISION."

2. IN SIMILAR VEIN, TIMINN, NEWSPAPER OF PM'S COALITION PARTNER PROGRESSIVE PARTY, CARRIED EDITORIAL OCTOBER 24 WHICH CITED HISTORICAL RECORD AND PARLIAMENTARY PRECEDENTS TO REJECT PEOPLES ALLIANCE CLAIMS THAT AGREEMENT SHOULD HAVE BEEN PUT BEFORE ALTHING, BUT WENT ON TO CALL FOR GENERAL DEFENSE DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT. TIMINN ALSO DEFENDED PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND FONMIN AGAINST PEOPLES ALLIANCE CHARGES OF CAPITULATING ON DEFENSE QUESTION BY SAYING THAT AGREEMENT WITH US ONLY REFLECTED REALITIES OF SITUATION AND WAS STEP IN DIRECTION OF PP OBJECTIVE OF NO ARMED FORCE IN ICELAND DURING PEACETIME.

3. PEOPLES ALLIANCE MP LUDVIK JOSEPSSON'S DISSENTING STATEMENT TO ALTHING FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE (REFTEL) APPEARED IN TODAY'S THJODVILJINN. STATEMENT CRITICIZES BOTH DECISION NOT TO SEEK PARLIAMENTARY APPROVAL AND TERMS OF AGREEMENT, WHICH, IT SAYS, WILL LEAD TO INCREASED MEDDLING BY MILITARY IN ICELAND'S AFFAIRS AS RESULT OF "SO-CALLED COOPERATION" BETWEEN IDF ON ONE HAND AND ICELANDIC COASTGUARD AND CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES ON OTHER. AGREEMENT WILL ALSO, ACCORDING TO JOSEPSSON, HAVE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON ECONOMIC EQUILIBRIUM OF SOUTHWEST ICELAND. THJODVILJINN ALSO CARRIED EDITORIAL SHARPLY ATTACKING FONMIN AGUSTSSON FOR HIS ROLE BOTH IN AGREEMENT AND IN DENYING PARLIAMENT ROLE IN DECISION.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, COLLECTIVE SECURITY AGREEMENTS, FORCE & TROOP LEVELS, PRESS CONFERENCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 24 OCT 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974REYKJA01457
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740304-0918
From: REYKJAVIK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741019/aaaaaqdr.tel
Line Count: 85
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: REYKJAVIK 1454
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAR 2002 by chappeld>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FURTHER COMMENT ON SIGNING OF DEFENSE AGREEMENT
TAGS: PFOR, MARR, US, IC, NATO, (HALLGRIMSSON)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005